

PROSPECTUS
OF A
NEW EDITION
OF
DODSLEY'S OLD PLAYS:
WITH
ADDITIONAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS,
BY THE LATE
ISAAC REED, OCTAVIUS GILCHRIST,
AND
THE EDITOR.

It is necessary briefly to preface the present edition of "Dodsley's Old Plays."

It is acknowledged on all hands that such a republication has been long wanted, and more than ten years ago the late Mr. Octavius Gilchrist printed a prospectus of the undertaking. For this task he was well qualified, not only by his own extensive knowledge of old English writers, but by the possession of a copy of the reprint of 1760, with the last notes and corrections of Mr. Isaac Reed. This copy, with various additional illustrations by Mr. Gilchrist, having devolved into the hands of the publisher of the present edition, he determined to avail himself of the valuable materials thus fur-

nished, and of all the information supplied by the recent ardent pursuit of old English poetry.

It is needless at this time of day to dwell on the peculiar merits and attractions of our Drama, as it existed during the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles; but it may be right to observe that the work known as Dodsley's Old Plays, has not hitherto included any performances by Thomas Nash, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, or George Peele, the contemporaries, and some of them at least, the predecessors and examples of Shakespeare. The long promised publication of the works of Shirley, and the forth-coming new edition of those of Ford, both under the superintendence of perhaps the most competent critic and illustrator it was ever the good fortune of old poet to meet with, has rendered it expedient now to reject three plays by the former and one by the latter hitherto embraced in this collection. Room will thus be afforded for productions by the four distinguished poets whose works, as above stated, have been wholly omitted. Thus a considerable additional value will be given to the present republication, and the stores of our ancient drama being rich as they are inexhaustible, it will be followed by a Supplement upon the same plan, including first-rate specimens, never reprinted and only in the hands of collectors. It is proposed, likewise, to add a volume of Masques and Pageants, of which neither Mr. Dodsley nor Mr. Reed furnished any examples, and which, independently of other at-

tractions, include some of the best lyric poetry in our language.

Correctness of text will be the first great object: the additional notes and illustrations of Reed and Gilchrist to such plays as were reprinted in 1780, will generally be sufficient in the way of verbal criticism, and in the productions now for the first time included in any collection the Editor will be especially careful not to burden the page with useless annotations and "the ostentation of vain learning."—If a word require explanation it can usually be given as well by one apposite reference to a contemporary author, as by a hundred. The biographical matter will be short but full, and accurate, omitting nothing of importance that modern research or the diligent reading of the Editor can supply. In the volume now printed will be found some matter new even to the most industrious of our literary antiquaries.

The first volume has been reserved for the purpose of rendering the preliminary matter as complete as possible, by the end of the publication, which (as far as regards the work known as "Dodsley's Old Plays") will be finished in a year, a volume being regularly delivered to the public every month. Altogether it is hoped that the enterprise will furnish a specimen of the union of accuracy, industry, and correct taste.

It may be fit to mention that the new notes and illustrations are thus marked: I. R. for those of

BLUE

PR

1263

P76

1825

c.1

4

PROSPECTUS.

Mr. Isaac Reed; O. G. for those of Mr. Octavius Gilchrist; and C. for those added by the present Editor.

This Work will be beautifully printed upon yellow laid paper, crown 8vo. price 9s. each volume, uniformly with the recent edition of Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, and the Plays and Poems of Shakespeare now publishing in eleven volumes.

A few copies have been taken off on large paper, price 14s. each volume, uniformly with Mr. Boswell's edition of Malone's Shakespeare and Gifford's Ben Jonson, &c.

April 30, 1825.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY SEPTIMUS PROWETT,
23, OLD BOND STREET.

4117317